SERIALISM I

Leftovers: Messiaen – organization of works post 1950 (esp. Oiseaux exotiques)

Boulez: Schoenberg is Dead

American Serialism:
Presentation: Milton Babbitt, Composition for Four Instruments
Babbitt, Three Compositions for Piano: 1 (1947)

European Serialism 1:
Darmstadt
Messiaen, Mode de valeurs et d’intensités (1949)
Stockhausen, Kreuzspiel (1951, rev. 1959)

Next class:
Assignment: 1pg response to Milton Babbitt, “Who Cares if you Listen?”
Serial Stravinsky, including a close reading of the extremely short Elegy for J.F.K. (1964)
also, Stravinsky, Agon (1957)
None, Il canto sospeso (1956) (mvmts. 2, 6a+b, [not 7], 9)

Reading:

1. Nomenclature:
   a. Non-Functional Harmony; Dissonant Diatonicism
   b. Atonality
   c. Twelve-Tone
   d. Serialism, Total Serialism, Integral Serialism, Multiple Serialism, Darmstadt school

2. Pioneers in Serialism (living in italics)
   a. French: Oliver Messiaen, Pierre Boulez
   b. Italians: Luigi Nono, Luciano Berio
   c. Germans: Karlheinz Stockhausen
   d. Americans: Milton Babbitt

3. The Serial Aesthetic
   a. Post-WWII: Embrace music that the Nazis hated.
   b. Why was Schoenberg dead to Boulez?
   c. Atomic music for the atomic age
   d. Virtuosity

4. The Serial Technique
   a. Start with a 12-tone row. Then number all the notes of the row from 1-12 according to their pitch.
      For instance: C=1, C♯=2, D=3, etc. to B=12.
b. You now have a row of numbers which represents your twelve-tone row. For instance, it might be: 2 8 7 4 11 1 12 3 9 6 5 10

c. Note durations: give each note a value, usually 1-12
d. for example: δ = 1; δ = 2; δ = 3; δ = 4 δ δ = 5; etc. to δ = 12
e. Or give a value to each position in the measure, such as:
f. \( \frac{3}{4} 1 e + a 2 3 e + a 3 e + a \)

\[ \begin{array}{cccccccccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 \\
\end{array} \]
g. Then either always use the notes (or note positions) in order from 1-12 or use them in the order of the row. So for the row above, “2 8 7 4 11 1…” the first six durations might be δ δ δ δ δ δ

h. Dynamics: assign each number from 1-12 a dynamic, for instance:
i. pppp = 1; pp = 2; p = 3 … etc. to fff = 12. So the row “2 8 7 4 11 1” might have the first four dynamics: ppp mf (quasi)-mf p fff ppp

j. Since 12 dynamics are hard to distinguish, many composers just used 6.
k. Octave: assign different octaves to different pitches. On a piano piece, you might use 6 octaves, etc.
l. Articulation: create 12 different articulations, one for each number of the row.
m. Timbres: have 12 different instruments or at least 12 different sounds (i.e., violin bowed, pizz., col legno would be 3). Assign a different timbre to each note of the row.

5. Application of Serialism: Stockhausen, Kreuzspiel (Cross Play) 1951
a. Two rows: one complex, one 1–12
b. Unusual Row rotation:
c. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
d. 2 3 4 5 6 12 1 7 8 9 10 11
e. 3 4 5 6 11 11 11 12 2 7 8 9 10
f. Six pitches in the highest register, six in the lowest
g. A combination of elements that are not (easily?) audible and a few that can be heard, along with interesting timbres and a continuous pulse (unusual)